

Lucky For Hope

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Sick!Fic. Mako's clock was ticking away her last months, stuck within the walls of the hospital with no one to help fill her quickly coming void. If she was going to leave the world, she wanted to do it with a friend. Gamagoori seems more than okay with being that friend. As they fight, their other friends each fight for survival and the chance to finally recover from illness.

Status: ongoing

Published: 2014-04-07

Words: 7209

Rated: Fiction T - Language: English - Genre: Angst/Hurt/Comfort -
Characters: [I. Gamagoori, Mako M.] Satsuki K., N. Jakuzure - Reviews: 4
- Favs: 20 - Follows: 19

Original source: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/10249586/1/Lucky-For-Hope>

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Lucky For Hope

Alright. Time to start up another hopefully successful series. I present you 'Lucky For Hope', my first double-plot line story. First plotline is Gamagoori/Mako and the other is Nonon/Sanageyama/Inumuta/Iori (no, this is not the pairing I'll be using). This is a Sick!Fic, so fair warning on any feels you develop.

Notes before you continue on (forgive me for the long opening A/N)

-The disease I gave Mako obviously does not exist and was made to integrate another aspect of KLK into the fic. The disease I gave Gamagoori however is real. All symptoms and future experiences with it happen in real life.

-I took into account the possibility of personality change with illnesses such as cancer and leukemia (since they do have the chance to isolate said affected people) and they may be OOC.

Proceed to the fic!

She had hoped for something to happen, a miracle, a chance, anything but it seemed her luck had finally ran out on her and her family. Even as they hooked her up to her all-too-familiar machines, an IV pushed into her arm and feeding her the fluids she needed, she felt like there had to be something else to help her. But no, doctors told her, there was nothing left besides countless amounts of chemo that didn't seem to be working besides holding back some of the symptoms for a very limited amount of time. After countless sessions, uncountable doses of experimental drugs and medicine, there was nothing left for her. Doctor after doctor kept telling her that there was no hope now but to ride out what little time she had in the hopes that maybe she would die a peaceful death.

How is spending her last days tied to machines and staring out a third-story window a peaceful death? How is watching her life flash before her out of reach a pleasant death?

Her family mourned still to this moment; she could see them sob from her bed. Doctors told them early on that they would have to separate from her so that the burden of the illness wouldn't hurt all of them mentally to the point of insanity. They were to leave today for good. Most of her things, which wasn't much, now rested within her permanent spot in the hospital. The rest was either in the care of her family or with her long-time non-sick friend Ryuuko. She was down there too, she bet, waiting for her time to visit her for the week.

She looked down at her bright blue bracelet proclaiming her diseased state, and her REVOCS technicolor band proclaiming her a guest under the protection of the Kiryūin Conglomerate. At least the Kiryūin family was kind enough to help her through this by covering all medical expenses, paying for her treatment, even providing monetary support for her family's living situation...

The sun was setting. She could see her brother wave up to her from the car. She waved back as greatly as she could, hoping that they would see her. From the reaction she got back, she knew he saw her. Her father and mother quickly waved goodbye to her before they all piled into their car and drove off, obviously having a difficult time leaving their eldest child in the hands of doctors who now await her death.

Mako wiped away her fast-falling tears, being careful of her IV in her right arm. She knew they had to leave but seeing her family go through it was hard enough to hurt her. She hated her stupid disease! She hated that it was ruining her family and hurting her friends-!

... what friends? She had only made one in the small time-frame before her multiple hospitalizations; before they found out about her illness. Although she had to thank Ryuuko so much for staying with her through this, it still was lonely. Ryuuko did stick with her through

this terribly bumpy ride. Even when she was bald and all her hair had fallen out courtesy of the chemo and radiation therapy, Ryuuko was there beside her, reminding her that she wasn't her illness and that she was perfect and still bubbly as ever even with no hair and a bunny-covered bandanna covering her lack of hair. She hadn't grown all of her hair back from then, and it hung barely an inch down her head in very few places. It was fuzzy in many places but at least it was all covered in one form or another in her brown hair.

Where was Ryuuko anyway? She promised that she would visit her today before she lost the window to visit thanks to the line-up of tests chemo and cancer group visits to come in the following weeks.

A tentative knock came from her door, and Mako was turning quickly to the door with an excited smile on her face. It had to be Ryuuko! She finally came to see her! The door opened wide and-

It wasn't Ryuuko. Her smile slid off, disappointment setting in, but she recognized the person by her familiar hair color and her eyebrows. Ryuuko's recently discovered sister, Satsuki.

Satsuki Kiryūin to be exact; the gracious provider of her medical help. A smile came back to her face, but it was not like her original at all. Satsuki silently closed the door behind her before turning to Mako and smiling softly.

"I realize that you were expecting Ryuuko, Mako" Satsuki said, leaning against the door. Mako shifted so she was sitting up, patting the space she made at the end of her bed for Satsuki to sit. Her visitor accepted the offer and took a sit on the medical bed, setting a hand beside her which Mako grappled to quickly. She scooted up to Satsuki quickly, moving to hug her arm but to only catch herself as Satsuki moved to let her hug her side. Mako slid into the comforting hold of the Kiryūin successor, and sighed softly.

"At least someone visited Mako! Is... is Ryuuko busy with something or did she forget?" Mako asked, digging her head into Satsuki's shoulder, looking sadly toward her door.

"She would never forget. She simply found herself too busy and could not get out of her responsibilities so she asked me to come in her stead" Satsuki replied, rubbing a spot on Mako's side to help comfort her. Mako leaned into the touch and gave a deep sigh again. She adjusted her right arm and moved her long IV so it wasn't tugging at her skin. She could feel the threat of tears prick at her eyes for no conceivable reason.

"Well I'm just happy that you visited. It gets lonely a lot in this room!" Mako replied, her disappointment slipping into her voice, "Plus I haven't been cleared to wander to the activity rooms without escort yet which is unfair! I can stand on my own, I can breathe okay, I can walk fine! Yes, I'm a little slow but I don't have anything horrible happening to me right now it's just not fair and I hate being stuck in this room separated from people who can bring some light to my already dimming life and they're just nit-picky people waiting for me to pass so they can finally stop worrying about me and... and I..."

Satsuki was grabbing for her hands quickly, running a hand through her hair as her EKG screeched as Mako's vitals and heart pounded and spiked to dangerous levels. Mako started to lose her grip, her spasms returning. She couldn't still her hands as they clawed furiously at Satsuki's back in desperate attempts to cling to something that felt a millions miles away. Mako's mind was on red alert and grey alert. She recognized that she was having an attack, a good medium-sized one but she couldn't do anything like all the other times. The one thing she had to suffer through thanks to her condition and her mind and body blanked on her when she needed to control it.

"Mako... breath. Breath, it's okay... it's okay, that's it deep breaths. It's alright Mako, just calm and relax. I'll talk with the staff and see if I can change some of that, alright? I promise you on my resolve that I will get you out of this oppressive little room and give you interactions with others alright?"

Mako was sobbing into her shoulder as her attack calmed. "O-Okay... okay..."

Satsuki smiled and cuddled Mako to her chest, letting the girl sob silently into her chest as she rode out the aftereffects of the attack. Her leg nervously shook against the bed, making sharp little pounding sounds against the metal frame. Her sobs turned into quiet crying after a minute of hard sobbing, her shaking instead taking over for a bit, Mako's entire frame shivering as if she were freezing to death. Satsuki held her through the entire calm-down process, not once thinking about leaving her. She soothingly rubbed Mako's back until she felt her body relax, her breathing softening as she slipped into sleep. Satsuki softly rubbed the top of her head.

She honestly hated this effect the illness had on Mako. It meant that she couldn't use her usually amusing outburst of explanations; she couldn't really be or become herself because of it.

An illness of both body and mind infected Mako, and now her light was fading slowly and rather painfully.

And no cure was close to coming for her.

When Mako woke up the next morning, she did not expect to see Satsuki sitting at the edge of her bed, running a soothing hand up and down the side of her covered leg, smiling like she had retaken back a kingdom from a dictator. Mako smiled as she stretched her arms above her head, yawning away her drowsiness.

"Good morning Mako" Satsuki greeted, turning off one of her machines to help her control her sleeping patterns. Mako slowly sat up with the help of her automatic bed, stretching out across her bed and lifting her hospital gown up and baring her midriff.

"Good morning Satsuki~ What are you doing here, I thought you would have been helping your company"

Satsuki's face lit up. "I transferred my operations on a personal request"

Mako tilted her head to the side in confusion. "Where to?"

"To you. Ryuuko's business I told you about yesterday? She had to fly out of the country and entrusted her best friend to me. I will atone for my absence in your treatment by making this stay as comfortable as possible"

Mako stayed silent, blinking back tears several times. Ryuuko was out of the country? She entrusted her sister in taking care of her? Why would Ryuuko leave without a word to her? That wasn't her Ryuuko at all! She would videochat, call her, something! She wouldn't just leave her alone and sad in this locked-up hospital.

"Because I didn't, you coconut head"

Mako looked up from her apparent slump and low ad behold, on the screen of the computer Satsuki had hidden from her, was Ryuuko smiling. She adjusted the collar of her burgundy and black pant suit quickly before flashing a trademark smirk of hers, sending a squeal through Mako's throat.. Mako launched up from her laid down position and moved quickly up to the webcam with the goofiest grin she could bring to the party, smooshing her face close to the point where Ryuuko could only see her eye in the video chat.

"RYUUUUUUKO! Hi! Good morning, where are you?"

Ryuuko gave a hearty laugh as Satsuki coaxed her back from the webcam. "Good morning Mako. It's actually night here, so if I fall asleep don't worry I'm just tired. I'm in Europe"

"Europe?! Why are you there?" Mako exclaimed, her eyes shining. Mako had always wanted to see the world.

"REVOCS has been wanting to iron out issues with the EU for a while and they finally made a move for it. I offered my help because somehow, on some lucky fucking life dice roll, I'm better at foreign language and interpretation than Satsuki and they wanted one of us to help in this deal"

"Don't mention it" Satsuki grumbled. Ryuuko laughed aloud and smirked like her usual self, bringing a bright smile to Mako's face. She may not have Ryuuko here in physical form but she got to see her best friend being herself, even from thousand of miles away.

"But why did you leave without a word?" Mako asked, her smile sliding away and her shoulders sagging down. Ryuuko gave an angry huff, scowling.

"Because REVOCS apparently had such a big stick up their asses to settle with the EU that the moment my job was sealed and settled, I was on a flight out of the country without the chance to even pack my predator defense weapons! I barely had time to do anything, so the moment I could I called Satsuki and demanded she take care of you while I was gone. I really am sorry I couldn't say goodbye Mako, but this damn company had me before I knew it"

Mako brushed away her falling tears with a warm chuckle. "We can still videochat and talk right?"

"Of course! Just remember that I'm in a different timezone so you may catch me while I'm sleeping or in a meeting" Ryuuko warned. Mako's smile returned.

Even though her buddy wasn't here in body, she could at least see her smile and hear her rant on and on about how REVOCS seems quite clear on keeping her busy for a while. They could finally talk and chat like they used to if time permitted them.

Time...

"Mako, what's wrong? Satsuki, you're my physical extension to her, can you comfort her for me?" Ryuuko asked worriedly. Satsuki gave a confirming sound and reached out for Mako, gently cupping her right cheeks, her thumb rubbing softly against her skin. She felt tears fall on to her hand as Mako squeaked, brushing them away with an inattentive wipe.

"Once again time controls us and what we want to do..." Mako said mournfully. The Kiryūin siblings exchanged gloomy looks and sighed in unison.

"Mako... sweetie, listen to me" Ryuuko asked. Mako looked up after brushing away Satsuki's hand with a soft 'thank you' and a weak smile.

Ryuuko placed her hand near the webcam, making it look like she was reaching out for her friend. "Fuck time. Don't believe whatever those fucking bastards in coats say. Tell time to take its stick up its ass out and then use that stick to beat some sense into time!"

Mako had to giggle at the absurdity of the sentence, which brought a smile to everyone in the room.

"If you need to call me, go ahead. If you want to videochat, go the fuck ahead. I'll drop everything for you and your cute face. Just ignore the time Mako, it makes life more exciting"

Mako looked confused. "Exciting how?"

Ryuuko smiled. "You don't know when something amazing is going to happen to 'ya"

"Alrighty Mankanshoku, we're done! You can open your eyes, stretch a bit, whatever you want" The nurse told her as she withdrew the needles and vials, replacing them into their original places for testing and evaluation. Mako slowly opened her eyes, fighting the wave of drowsiness and sitting up slowly with assistance from the nurse. She ran her hands over her fuzzy cover of hair and slowly did her breathing exercise to control her stomach and pounding head before things took a turn to the dangerous grey zone again.

"Are you okay?" the nurse asked as she slowly moved Mako to the side of the bed, her legs dangling over the edge. Mako nodded.

"Yep, just keeping calm! I'm all good!"

The nurse flashed a smile. "Alright! Now if you can stand up so we can make sure nothing bad came from the test..."

Mako slipped off her bed and shifted around her gown, making sure it was tied correctly in the back so she wasn't flashing anyone. She took a quick walk to the door and back, stretching out her stiff limbs. The nurse approved of her physical condition and moved out of the room with the collected data and samples, and dodged Satsuki as she walked in with a metal IV stand.

"Guess who got you access to the activity room?" Satsuki prompted, moving for Mako's IV bag and attaching it to the stand. Mako was busy celebrating giving off crazy arm waves and excited yelling for the fact that she could get out of her room at last and see other patients and people besides doctors and nurses. She calmed and relaxed as Satsuki rolled the stand to her, handing it off. Mako wheeled it to her side and went to walk when Satsuki handed her a set of clothes. A blank blue colored tank top and soft checkered pajama pants with pockets in the front. Mako could barely control herself as she shed her disgusting hospital cover and tugged on her new clothes.

"Figured you needed something new along with your new freedoms" Satsuki commented. "I hope you like the colors, the stock was rather limited"

"It's all good! They fit perfectly! Oh, help with the IV?" Mako asked. She could get her top on without removing her IV temporarily. Satsuki disconnected her drip quickly and held it from leaking over Mako as she slid into the tank top, presenting her wrist promptly. Satsuki reattached the tub and let the IV continue to flow into her. Mako grabbed for her rolling IV stand again.

"Just keep this at your side at all times and keep an eye on your tubes, deal?"

"Deal! Let's go!"

Satsuki walked calmly along side Mako down the hall, heading toward one of the activity rooms for patients. All the while, Mako's thoughts were abuzz on who was going to be meeting. What was going to happen in there anyway? Would she have to explain what she was diagnosed with, her story? Maybe they would look like her, effected by chemo and dozens of tests and treatments. They could have even better stories than her own, and they could be her friends! Maybe she would get to do something she hadn't done in so long, like gossip about the randomness around them and get close.

"Mako, you're blushing" Satsuki commented. Mako squeaked and covered her cheeks, stopping their trek for a moment.

"Don't point it out! I can't stop thinking about whats going to happen when we get there"

"It's all good, Mako. Come on, we're close"

They continued onward down the hall, hearing the muffled sounds of others coming from an open room near the end. Mako's heart started to pound in her ears. This was it, she finally arrived. She could hear nurses and patients inside laughing and talking, sounding happy. Would they accept her and let her into their circles? Would she make hospital friends? Satsuki opened the door for her and the duo went in. Mako had to smile softly as she surveyed the large room.

Although the color scheme was not her favorite, grey and soft blue with made the walls seem dull and boring, the room was lively with the sound of patients trying to put some light in their lives. A portion of the wall was a literally paint dump of colors, a few smaller children painting with their hands to make the wall even more colorful. A few older patients on the end of their ropes sat around in circles, discussing possibly their stories of their time here or their lives before their illness took them under. Some were doodling on the walls like they were masters of the arts, while others were enjoying the makeshift chessboards scattered around. Mako heard the familiar sound of machines beeping and the visuals of IV bags

scattered about. She spotted a group of teens she suspected were around her age, surrounding a table covered in candy bars, various forms of money, and what looked like juice boxes. Satsuki whistled over to the group Mako was looking at and the pink-haired girl at the table looked at her, and smiled widely.

"Guys! It's Satsuki! Satsuki, come over here!" she called, waving Satsuki over. Her happiness faltered though when she saw Mako at Satsuki's side. She huffed and returned to her game but the two other people were busy looking toward Satsuki and Mako. Pink-haired's neighbor, Green-hair, waved them both over while Blond-haired next to him looked at Mako with a curious expression.

Satsuki nudged Mako's side softly. "Come on then Mako. It's time to meet some of my friends here"

Mako nodded quickly and moved alongside Satsuki, bringing her IV along with her. As she neared Satsuki's friends, Mako couldn't help but survey them.

One girl, two boys. Breathing tubes in Green-haired boy's nose, as well as smoky eyes so maybe he was having eye problems? She could only guess. Pink-haired girl didn't seem to like her from her response to her being near Satsuki, but she seemed to have dealt with chemo because her hair looked out-of-place as its short cut self. She scratched at it and revealed injection sites on her arm, so she had done Clinical Trials. Good for her to volunteer for them, they scared Mako to all corners. Then there was the last one of the group.

Blond hair, pretty grey eyes and a rather sculpted body though he looked like he just worked out regularly. He still was slightly buffer than Green-hair. He was still looking at her with that same expression, just her. He seemed to be all healthy, but Mako knew not to judge by the outside because she looked fine from the outside besides her hair. He could have some rare, stage-three cancer or a disease that was rotting his organs. You never knew what you could get in hospitals such as this.

"Who's the new girl?" Pink Hair asked with an obvious 'I don't really care' tone, tossing a small coin on to the pile on the table.

"Nonon, Sanageyama, Gamagoori" Satsuki snapped, getting all three of their attentions. Nonon sighed and smiled a little at Mako, but it dropped and widened when she directed her attention to Satsuki.

Satsuki cleared her throat and presented Mako. "This is my new patient who I'll be aiding here for a while. She needs a place to start here and I hope you three will let her in while she stays."

"Since when did you personal aid here?" Sanageyama asked, dropping his cards down.

"Since my sister left for Europe with REVOCS. I gladly took her post here with her because of personal reasons"

Nonon gave a grunt of approval. "Alright, she can join. She seems nice from the way she's smiling. Take a seat, new girl, we'll deal you in. Gamagoori, scoot over for her and her IV"

Satsuki stopped Mako for a moment before she sat down. "I'll be over there with the other nurses if you need anything, alright?"

"Alright" Mako responded and wheeled her IV stand to the spot Gamagoori had cleared for her. She sat down cross-legged and adjusted her IV again, moving the line so it wasn't hitting her skin so hard. Stupid thingy, Mako thought angrily at it, stop pinching my skin!

"Do you need some help?" Gamagoori asked, lowering his cards and taking notice to her anger toward her IV line.

Mako looked up at Gamagoori with uncertainty. How would he help with an IV? He didn't have one in his arm, so maybe he picked up a trick or two from his friends who had IVs? Or maybe he's taking pity on her? It didn't really matter much for her because he was willingly

offering her help and he seemed really nice and had a look in his eyes she deemed friendly.

"Sure" Mako responded, displaying her arm with the IV. He pinched the IV tube between two fingers.

"The trick to keep it from pinching you is simple. Lift it up off your arm and then to the right. It'll lift the IV far enough off your arm to keep it from pinching without actually moving the IV" Gamagoori instructed her, replaying what he told her before returning her arm to her.

Mako couldn't believe it. She didn't feel the IV pinching her! Gamagoori was right, it didn't pinch her anymore! She gaped at the IV like it was gold.

"Thank you Gamagoori! It wouldn't stop pinching me for the longest time, ever since that one time they had to replace it after I accidentally removed my first IV" Mako thanked him, cuddling up to his arm. Gamagoori flinched at the physical contact and softly started to push Mako off of him. Mako realized that she was making him feel uncomfortable and backed off of him, scooting back to the respectable distance she originally was at. She picked up the cards she was dealt, glad to know she knew how to play the game. She was trained and played by Ryuuko for hours on end, so she knew how to swindle and play others like Ryuuko could easily! Being taught by a master has its perks.

"Um... do I need to play in or bet?" Mako asked softly. Nonon looked over her cards with a neutral look, though Mako could see her eyes brows twitch.

"Do you any have anything to bet?" she asked. Mako shook her head, her cards lowering to her lap.

"No because I haven't gotten the chance to get anyth-"

Nonon scoffed, obviously not amused by the fact that a empty player was in her game. Mako's cheeks puffed out in anger. She did not

appreciate Nonon's rudeness and hate toward her! Her anger started to boil under her skin-

"Nonon, stop being rude. You can not expect her to have a horde of things to bet. This is her first time out of her room, so she isn't expected to be spectacular" Gamagoori defended her, her anger fluttering back to zero. Nonon grumbled something along the lines of 'alright, alright I'll leave her be let's just continue the game'.

Gamagoori gave Mako a few things under the table, making sure Sanageyama didn't see them. He handed her a few coins and bits of candy, ones that made Mako drool. She hadn't had candy in ages, and it was all hers to eat as she pleased.

"Hide the candy for later" Gamagoori whispered, giving her a smile. Mako felt her heart flutter and sputter for a moment. His smile... it made him look so young and cute! She smiled back at him and slid the candy into the pockets of her pants. Now she could get rolling with these guys!

By the time the game ended a few hours later and many of the other patients had left for their rooms, Mako had gained more than she lost, netting a good pile of money and candy to last her the weekend if she didn't bet it again. Nonon was impressed with her skill and credited her technique and poker face, while Sanageyama turned to a bit of a sore loser, not happy that he lost more than he gained. Nonon wouldn't drop that fact. Gamagoori came out even, netting enough to cover his butt for the next game.

"Thank you Gamagoori for the betting money, oh and again for the IV trick!" Mako turned to him and excitedly spoke. Gamagoori flushed under her bright smile and adjusted his sitting position so he could face her full front. They were the last two left at the table, and among the last ten in the room before lights out for the day.

"You're welcome. I'm surprised that you didn't know that trick"

Mako rubbed her head, trying to fight back rising embarrassment.

"Well, I never knew there was one, thanks to the... isolation..."

Gamagoori couldn't help but grab her hand, feeling empathy for her. "I was isolated for a while too but look where we both are now"

Mako's heart sped up again, her body sending mixed signals to her brain. She felt the beginning threads of the grey zone writhing on the edge of her mind but it felt more natural than illness-induced. He was being nice to her, being friendly, being sympathetic.

Did he want to be friends with her?

"Mako, I'm sorry but it's time to go" She heard Satsuki call. She sighed and stood up slowly, keeping a hold on her IV stand to keep her steady. Gamagoori stood up with her up she was moving toward Satsuki and the exit quickly.

"Wait! Wait, I never got your name!"

Mako stopped on a dime, quickly turning around alongside her IV stand. Satsuki stopped along with her, holding the door of the room open.

"Mako Mankanshoku is my name! Eldest daughter to the Mankanshoku family"

Gamagoori looked confused for a moment. "And why are you here? You look fine, in great condition in all honesty. Did something happen, if you don't mind me asking?"

Mako's face heated up, but inside her head she was falling again, hurting from the realization that this was not going to go over well. The moment he found out, he would reject her, like the rest of this ignorant society who never believed her. Her hands wringed together nervously

"I suffer from Deteriorating Tremor Rebounds. My body is rejecting myself in a sense, and I'm not going to live long. It was great meeting you but I have to go..."

Mako looked over her shoulder at Satsuki, but she did not look to her but at Gamagoori instead. Mako looked back at him and found him staring at her wide-eyed. Did he believe her? Did he want to reject such a reality and just believe she was fine? He started to look sad, like he hoped that something less severe had her in its grasp. She didn't know how to react to his reaction.

"Come on Mako, it's time" Satsuki called, but it sounded empty. No one moved. Mako felt her tears fall and she grabbed for her IV stand but found open air. She was falling, she couldn't steady herself fast enough. Her mind went grey again, her body shook even as she fell. She couldn't make out the screams around her nor the calls for help as she drifted in and out of her grey zone.

She felt strong, warm somethings around her before she saw the blurry outline of what looked like bruising. Someone was yelling for a nurse. Someone was lifting her and settling her within the familiar warmth of Satsuki's arms. She was whispering calming words into her ear, but most were blocked by the grey around her.

Mako stuttered out something, but she didn't know what. She did hear, however, a response from a boy's voice; Gamagoori's deep and soothing voice.

"I won't let a friend hurt herself, even if I must hurt myself to protect her"

Friend... did Gamagoori... see her as a friend? Did he protect her from the fall? Did he really call her a friend?!

"Thank Gamagoori for me" Mako asked Satsuki as she came out of grey mode, realizing that she was back in her room. Satsuki smiled and brushed her hand through Mako's fuzzy hair.

"You already did"

Mako didn't realize that she had fallen asleep, nor did she realize that Gamagoori was sitting in one of the guest chairs in her room, the outline of his nurse on the other side of her door. She blinked away the sleepiness in her eyes, focusing on Gamagoori. He was asleep too, softly snoring into his palm. She coughed out a kink in her throat, rubbing her throat. Gamagoori woke up at the sound, and flashed a smile her way. There her heart went again, beating quickly and her EKG caught it in the act, beeping fast alongside her heart. She blushed and covered her face, hoping that Gamagoori didn't notice but she knew she wouldn't get that wish. She peeked through her hands to see Gamagoori blushing as well.

"Hi Gamagoori" Mako greeted, moving her hands to her lap. Gamagoori stood up slowly and calmly walked over to her bedside, leaning on it before deciding to sit on the end of her bed. Mako adjusted herself and the bed so that she was sitting up, her legs folded.

"Good morning"

His nurse came in at the sound of his voice, smiling at him and Mako. Mako seemed to recognize the face of the nurse, but she couldn't pinpoint where.

"You know he slept here all night? Got so worked up and worried about you, Mankanshoku, that we got permission from Lady Satsuki for him to sleep here and watch over you"

Gamagoori's blush grew three sizes and brightened two hues. He covered his face as his attending nurse explained out what happened to Mako, who could only look at Gamagoori as he grew more and more flustered after each tale the nurse belted out. Mako absorbed every word of it, storing it away for later. Gamagoori slept here the entire night, worried about her and less about himself. They asked Satsuki if he could stay because he could not drop the fact that she had gone into the grey zone. He made sure that she was okay when something weird came on her monitors. They even had a

extra hospital bed brought in, now removed, that he could sleep in for the night so that he could be right there if something happened.

He had all done this for her, a simple friend?

"And lets not forget to mention he risked himself to save you from hurting yourself when you fell, like an idiot"

Gamagoori defended himself. "It wasn't idiotic! No one was close enough to her to keep her from hitting something"

"But you got hurt by it!" his nurse added.

"HURT?!" Mako exclaimed. He got hurt because of her? His nurse did not add anything else, simply giving Gamagoori a look before leaving again, this time her shadow disappearing down the hall. Gamagoori was left with a distressed Mako. She asked where he got hurt and he obliged in showing her and shrugged off his shirt, turning to show her his right side. What Mako saw had her gasping in disbelief.

All up and down his right side, from shoulder to hip, were dark, ugly-looking bruises. Some were brown and green while others were bright pink and red, and alongside almost all of them were these tiny pinpoint dark red dots. He looked like he had been brutally attacked. She reached out and softly ran her fingers over them, but quickly withdrawing as Gamagoori hissed in pain at the touch.

"I'm sorry!" Mako apologized. Gamagoori shook his head.

"It's alright, it's just incredibly tender right now, it's why I'm moving a little slower" He explained, hovering his left hand over the set of bruises. "It's actually not the worst that's happened to me so don't worry so much"

"You mean you've been bruised even more severely? How did you get all of this by just protecting me from my fall?"

Gamagoori looked down at his feet, and Mako had a feeling she stepped over a boundary. She started to apologize when he simply cut her off with a wave of a hand. She hadn't and she was glad for it. He sighed deeply and shuffled around in his seat.

"You said... you have... Deteriorating Tremor Rebounds, right? DTR?"

Mako nodded softly, confirming the statement. Gamagoori gave a sad smile toward her, knowing how it felt to have such deteriorating diseases. He had one of his own. He cupped the bruises along his side as he finally explained his story.

"I'm here with high-risk Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia" Gamagoori admitted, "I've been here for a while, since I was a teen. I was lucky I found out about it when I was young, but I've continued to have relapses after my remissions. Consolidation therapy is almost obsolete. It's just a constant ping-pong game of remission and consolidation with very little recuperation time. Thanks to ALL, I bruise and bleed easily, I can get sick easy, and I'm almost always tired one way or another. It's been a long coping period really since I found out. I even lost a lot of muscle and mass thanks to this thing. I used to be much bigger"

"How big, how big were your muscles? Would you still fit at the end of my bed if you had them?" Mako asked with a smile, hoping it would keep Gamagoori's spirit up. She knew how big of a downer it could be admitted such a thing to someone. Gamagoori's smile returned.

"Probably not, no. It's funny; I never expected to gain muscle at all, especially that much muscle. It was a welcome surprise with ALL, but like the rest of my life... it took it away without a word beforehand" he replied. He grew silent again, heart pounding painfully in his ribs. Mako knew that feeling, and felt the need to comfort him.

Mako latched her arms around her right arm, hugging it close. Gamagoori looked down weirdly at Mako as tightened her hold on his arm, not hurting him as he snuggled against it like a child. She did not look at him but she spoke with words from the heart.

"DTR took everything from me too. I understand your pain. I lost my family a few days ago because doctors told them staying too long would just make things worse mentally for all of us. What little I own is in the other room, and most of it I can't even use or touch. The only things I really have are my friends, Ryuuko and Satsuki... and you. You wanted to be friends and having another friend would be better than all the candy in the world. You could stay with me until the end"

Gamagoori started, an unfriendly shiver running up and down his spine. "The end?"

"DTR is an almost entirely unknown, incurable disease that affects my nervous and immune system, as well as a few physical components," Mako went on to explain, quoting countless doctors recounting their findings to her parents, "It can be treated like cancer and leukemia with chemo and radiation, as well as drugs, but they can't really put it into remission or reduce the cancerous cells due to a mutation in them. My body is rejecting me, my mind, myself. If I get too excited or too emotional, I black out and have no control over my body and very little control over my mind. A 'grey zone' is what I call it.

"It also means that it's slowly killing me and I'll be dead within two months so I don't want to be alone when it happens"

Gamagoori flinched hard, his supporting arm shrieking out as pain snapped up his bones. She was slated for death this early? She detached herself from him and ran her hands over the peach-like fuzz of her hair. She seemed so calm to it. How long ago did she accept the fact that she was going to die? he thought worriedly, No one should accept it that easy without being told countless times. No one should accept something like that so easily. He reached out to

her and caught a hand as it moved to relocate, catching Mako by surprise. A blush crept to her cheeks as he refused to let go of that hand.

Mako couldn't stop her heart from pounding so hard. It felt ready to burst from her chest. Her vision blurred at the edges as a grey zone started to develop, but it went no further. Gamagoori stared into her eyes without a single break besides to blink. His other hand rose up and rested on her head, his fingers feeling the fuzzy still-growing patches of hair. She looked up at the hand as it ran over the right side of her head before it cupped her face gently.

"I'll stay as long as you need me, Mako" he told her, "as long as you are there for me when I need you"

Tears built up in her eyes, yet nothing negative from her illness followed them; a first for her in years. She nodded quickly which wiped away her tears for her, but still more came in the softest yet heaviest wave for relief she ever had.

"I promise, I'll be there" Mako cried, leaning against him once more, "Th-thank you for being my friend Gamagoori!"

Gamagoori wrapped an arm around her carefully. "You're welcome" he whispered into her adorably fuzzy hair.

They let silence wrap them in peaceful bliss, simply leaning on each other for support, Mako's tears slowly drying and the grey zone retreating away as her stronger emotions died down to softer ones. They let the day pass along without them, and no one really seemed to notice it. Gamagoori adjusted his spot once more to move the arm balancing his weight, which still throbbed in pain from the earlier flinch. Mako was asleep on him, softly breathing in peace. He carefully laid her back in her hospital bed before moving from it and covering her up, letting her get a little more sleep before her chemo session in an hour. He would be there for that session, keeping her company as they helped limit her symptoms pointlessly again. The

door of the room slid open and Satsuki entered with laptop tucked under one arm, keeping the door propped open using her foot.

"Thank you Ira" she thanked him, "You've put a little more light into her dimmed life"

A smile found its way to his lips. "She put something back in mine. That's how friendship works, doesn't it?"